

Statement by Ms Hina Jilani, Special Representative of the Secretary General on the
situation of human rights defenders
At the fourth session of the Human Rights Council

28/08/07
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My report to the Council presents the global situation of human rights defenders through the statistics that I bring to your attention regarding the communications transmitted to governments, as well as through a description of activities carried out in the past one year for the implementation of the mandate.

The main focus of this report, however, is on the situation of human rights defenders working in the field of economic, social and cultural rights. I have presented an overview of the legal context for the activities of these defenders, and have also described the different kinds of economic, social and cultural rights that defenders are working to promote. I have highlighted the serious nature of the violations that these defenders experience because of their activities for the promotion and protection of these rights.

By focusing this report on the work of these defenders, I wish to emphasize that not only are the rights that these defenders seek to promote inalienable to the international human rights framework, but the activities they conduct in this respect are also fully protected by the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.¹ This focus is also, in part, my response to questions that have sometimes been raised regarding the status of those promoting economic, social and cultural rights as defenders of human rights.

I have noted that in a significant number of cases brought to my attention, it is the denial of economic, social and cultural rights that has spurred action by defenders that has led to the violation of their human rights. While this reality is more marked in the Asian and the

¹ *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, adopted by General Assembly resolution 53/144 of 9 December 1998.